

Garner Town Council  
Work Session Minutes  
March 31, 2015

The Garner Town Council will meet in a Work Session at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 31, 2015 in the Town Hall Council Meeting Room.

Present: Mayor Williams, Mayor ProTem Johns, Council Members Behringer, Kennedy, Marshburn and Singleton.

Staff Present: Hardin Watkins-Town Manager, Rodney Dickerson-Asst. Town Manager, John Hodges-Asst. Town Manager, Emily Lucas-Finance Director, Town Chalk-Town Engineer, Sonya Shaw-Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Director, Reginald Buie-Neighborhood Improvement Manager, Tony Beasley-Economic Development Director.

A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Williams called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

The Council and other interested parties were asked to step outside to view samples of vehicles which were ranked using the VERT system.

Council recognized several individuals participating in the Garner 101 program.

B. REPORTS

**Economic Report**

**Presenter: Emily Lucas, Finance Director and Joe Stallings, Economic Development Director**

Joe Stallings presented an update on the status of Garner's Economic Development. Since the end of January, over \$3billion in projects have been submitted, which does not include requests for smaller amounts of space or any space in the Garner Technology Center site. A Strategic Work Plan is being developed to ensure a comprehensive approach to economic development and ensure goals are met. The categories identified were Administration, Commercial/Industrial, Retail, Entrepreneurship, and Residential Development.

Mr. Stallings advised Council the the Lonnie Poole property has been added to the Duke Site Readiness Program and final documentation will be submitted April 10. Preliminary site work has begun and a site visit from McCallum Sweeney is scheduled to take place in June. Once the project is complete, the Town will receive a \$10,000 grant to further improve the site. Council Member Singleton asked where McCallum Sweeney was located. Mr. Stallings advised that the closest location was Greenville, SC. Mr. Stallings added that McCallum Sweeney was an economic development and site selection firm which helps communities develop a product, performs a buildability/developability study, and narrow the focus for potential clients for a site. They also have the ability to help market Garner on a global scale.

Council Member Kennedy asked if the services provided by McCallum Sweeney was part of the \$10,000 grant. Mr. Stallings advised that the actual cost of the service was \$25,000 of in-kind work, \$10,000 from Duke Energy.

Council Member Johns asked the acreage of the Lonnie Poole property. Mr. Stallings advised the property was around 150 acres with some wetlands and a utility easement. The property is ideally

located with great access to seaports and airports. Infrastructure is in place as well as a marketing agreement with the property owner.

Efforts are also underway to assist with retention of current businesses. An industry survey is being developed as well as personal meetings to establish open communication.

Mr. Stallings and Mr. Hodges attended the NC Life Science Economic Development Summit on March 26 where they met with several site selectors and explained what the Town of Garner has to offer. The Town will be partnering with Wake County Economic Development for the National BIO Show in June.

Ms. Lucas gave a brief overview of the employment rate, building activity, and home sales for the first quarter of 2015. Interest rates are anticipated to rise in the summer. The Town received a 2.82% rate on the recent \$14.67M bond sale along with a premium which will be used to assist with the Indoor Recreation Center and Town Hall projects.

Ms. Lucas provided the following information regarding SB 369 (Sales Tax Fairness Act).

- shift local sales tax from a 75/25% split of point of sale/per capita to all per capita over a 3-year period
- Convert local sales tax to “state sales tax” (less control)
- All county distributions would be all on per capita basis (Wake County already does this)
- No sharing of ¼-cent additional sales tax between counties and cities
- Allow repeal of previously-enacted additional sales taxes
- Due to anticipated population growth within Wake County during 3-year phase in period, should estimate that sales tax distributions will generally be flat for next 3 budget years
- If we were to have a “flat” sales tax revenue, the Town would need to increase property tax rate approximately 1.5-cents to recover revenue

Mr. Watkins encouraged Council to speak with area Representatives regarding the impact SB 369 would have on the Town.

Ms. Lucas provided the following information regarding HB 168 (Exempt Builder’s Inventory).

- During recession, deferral of property tax on builder’s inventory
- New Bill would keep tax on subdivided land at large tract rate and not tax the actual homes until sold
- New Bill would apply to everyone (builders, developers, etc.)
- Could significantly defer tax growth and create burden for tax office

Other Legislative issues include:

- Economic Development
  - Possible reinstatement of historic tax credits
  - Possible extension of sunset on tax credits, renewable energy, R&D and low-income housing
  - Elimination of sunset to utilize special assessments for new development structure
- NC Competes Act (House Bill)
  - Expands JDIG but has expanded sales tax refunds
  - Different Senate bill keeps JDIG (but shifts it to rural counties) and adjusts the corporate income tax rate
- SB 20 (Motor Fuels Tax Changes)
  - Stabilizes gas tax revenues
  - HB 203 (Phase Out of Fuel Tax) – charge everyone \$201/vehicle/year

- Gas tax is sole source of Powell Bill Funds

Action: Council Member Marshburn suggested Council pass a resolution detailing the negative impacts of HB 168 and SB 369 to the Town of Garner as well as other municipalities. After discussion, Council agreed to direct staff to prepare the resolution.

#### A. ACTION ITEMS

##### **P&R Accreditation**

**Presenter: Sonya Shaw, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Director**

Mr. Dickerson gave an overview of the progress made towards the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources accreditation. He explained that currently there are 136 accredited Parks & Recreation Departments in the U.S. with 8 of those being in North Carolina. The accreditation process is administered by the Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), an independent 13 member Commission sanctioned by the National Recreation and Parks Association.

Ms. Shaw explained that the accreditation process began in March 2010. They are the third Department in the Town to seek accreditation. Accreditation allows agencies a way to compare our standards against national standards of best practice and creates an atmosphere for regular review of operations, policies, and procedures. The accreditation package was submitted on April 8, 2015. The CAPRA Team 3-Day Visitation is scheduled for June 22-24 and will include a reception with Council, the Advisory Committee, volunteers, and staff. A status report from CAPRA will be provided in July/August 2015 which will include the Commission review of information submitted and visitation team report as well as allow for a return agency response. Team Members will attend the NRPA Congress to respond to remaining accreditation questions on September 15-17, 2015 and attend the awards ceremony.

Council Member Johns asked what happens if we fail, could we reapply. Ms. Shaw advised the process allows 30 day window to repair and resubmit. Council Member Kennedy asked Ms. Shaw what the biggest surprise was during this process. Ms. Shaw responded the biggest surprise was the level of commitment from staff and how well they worked together.

Ms. Shaw explained that there were several items requiring action by Council in order to move forward with the accreditation process; approval of the Strategic Plan 2015-2020, Donation and Memorial Policy, Revenue Policy, and Sponsorship Policy. It was explained that these items would be reviewed and updated on a regular basis as part of the accreditation process. Ms. Shaw gave a brief explanation of each of these documents. Council Member Singleton requested a review of the non-resident fees during the FY 15/16 budget process.

Action: Council Member Marshburn made a motion to approve these policies as presented. Seconded by Council Member Johns. All voted aye.

#### B. DISCUSSION ITEMS

##### **Proposed Unified Development Ordinance Amendment (UDO) Regarding Solar Farms**

**Presenter: David Bamford, Planning Department**

Mr. Bamford explained that this information was presented at the Law and Finance Committee meeting on March 11 and it was their recommendation that this item move forward.

Mr. Bamford stated the Town recently received an inquiry about allowing a solar farm operation within its ETJ. The current Unified Development Ordinance does not specifically address solar farm facilities. The closest category would be "other major utility" which includes uses such as water towers, electric and telephone boxes, pump stations, and telecommunication towers. Staff feels this category is not a good fit for solar farms as they create different impacts such as aesthetics, noise, glare and stormwater, potential safety issues and property values.

A typical solar farm has a capacity of 1 megawatt and would occupy 6 to 10 acres of land with approximately 3,000 to 4,000 solar panels. This size operation could supply power for about 100 homes.

A number of photos were shown to illustrate different types and layouts of solar farms.

Solar farms are becoming more prominent in North Carolina as a result of the Senate bill adopted in 2007 which requires electric utilities in the state to produce 12.5% of their retail energy sales from renewable energy sources by 2020. The state of North Carolina currently has 120 solar farms.

A survey was conducted to determine how other jurisdictions address solar farms. Some of the common issues were zoning districts solar farms were allowed in, buffers/screening/landscaping, setbacks, height limits on panel structures, and termination of use or decommissioning. It was also noted that most of the ordinances adopted were done so within the last two years.

Action: Place this item on the Council's April 6 Consent Agenda to set public hearing.

#### **Vehicle Equipment and Replacement Team (VERT) Report**

**Presenter: Rodney Dickerson, Assistant Town Manager**

Mr. Dickerson explained the purpose of the VERT program was to establish a systematic approach to fleet replacement, vehicle scoring, technology equipment and projects. Mr. Dickerson explained the Town vehicle inventory included 125 vehicles and 41 pieces of equipment; the majority in use by the Police Department and Public Works Department. Vehicles and equipment were given a ranking of Good, Fair, Poor, and Priority based on point values. Mr. Dickerson also reminded Council that even if a vehicle qualified for replacement, replacement was not guaranteed. Mr. Dickerson also explained that due to the downturn in the economy, vehicle replacement was delayed for several years and this system was a way to get back on track. Mr. Watkins explained that non-construction costs for the new police station includes a part of the phone system cost.

Council Member Marshburn felt the VERT process was good.

Council Member Singleton asked Chief Zuidema how the Dodge Chargers performed. The Chief stated they performed with mixed reviews.

Action: No action; this information will be considered during the FY 15/16 budget process.

#### **Pay Plan Increase**

**Presenter: Hardin Watkins, Town Manager**

Mr. Watkins presented the results of the Pay and Classification Study performed by The MAPS Group. One third of the Town's full-time positions are reviewed each year as part of a 3-year cycle. After reviewing the market salary data and the position descriptions, it was recommended the Town's entire pay plan be adjusted 2.5%. The last update to the pay plan was in July 2008. Mr. Watkins explained this reclassification should

reduce the number of reclassifications and increase the Town's ability to hire and retain employees. Council Member Kennedy requested the number of position turnovers for the last 3 years.

Action: No action; Council will consider this update during the FY 15/16 budget preparation.

**Development of Infrastructure in Town's Southeastern Future Growth Area**

**Presenter: Hardin Watkins, Town Manager**

Development opportunity at New Bethel Church Road. Mr. Watkins reported a project that was approved by Wake County for a 90 lot subdivision outside of Garner's ETJ across from the proposed South Garner High School property which is in the town limits. The developer is ready to move forward with construction – homes are planned to be sold in the \$350,000 range. Mr. Watkins said if we do nothing; the subdivision will be developed with a community water system, septic tanks and NC DOT "ribbon" streets. Mr. Watkins and staff have been working with the City of Raleigh who is interested in not having a community well system next to the 201 Wastewater Treatment site. He summarized if we do nothing, we get nothing and if we annex, we get tax base.

Council Member Kennedy, who has been involved in the meetings with the developer, reiterated this is a significant residential development along New Bethel Church Road across the street from the proposed school site. The developer has been working on this project for 2 – 3 years. Based on his location and permit approvals from Wake County he has no right or obligation to work with us. The Council discussed this at the retreat as one of our focus areas and concluded we need to look strategically as to where we might need to add infrastructure in order to entice or guide development. It was decided at the retreat to make no immediate plans, but we didn't know this development was ready to move.

Action: No action; presented information.

E. ADJOURN -10:03 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Stella Gibson